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## Indiana Writers

Richard Cordell

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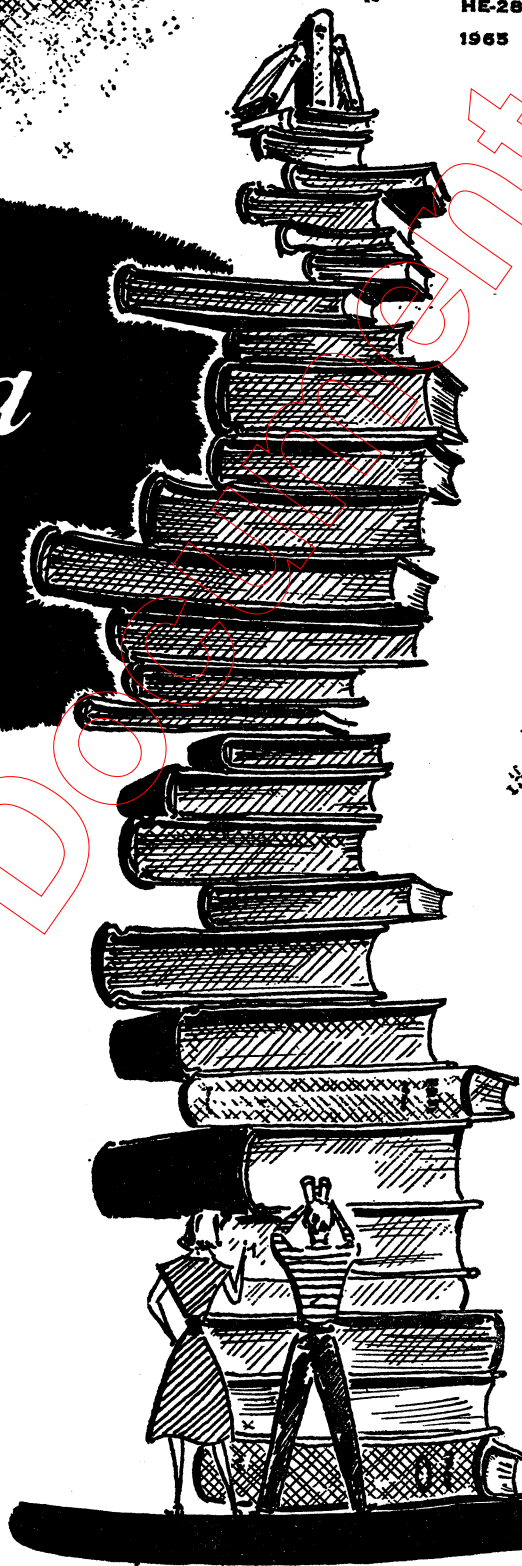
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HE-289  
1965

# *Indiana Writers*

**PURDUE UNIVERSITY**  
Cooperative Extension Service  
Lafayette, Indiana



## Preface

The exciting drama of the American people's vigorous attempts to adapt themselves to change is reflected in the growth of adult education, which has come into focus in the last decades. The general desire to know more about everything is a characteristic of our age. Everywhere mature citizens are seeking, not only technical and scientific information, but also cultural development, as indicated by the accelerated demand for courses in the appreciation of art, music, and literature; the increased sale of classical as well as popular recordings; and the increasing number of good books, fiction and non-fiction, available in "paper-back" form.

Although quite properly concerned with the technical, we are necessarily aware of the acknowledged opportunities for individual growth which stem simply from the habit of reading. Many of the men and women of Indiana have long been aware of the values which come from a study of literature. We hope that this publication, which deals with the authors of our own state, will be helpful to those who are interested in developing their critical powers and deepening their appreciation so as to enjoy reading even more than before.

Hoosiers are known for their pronounced loyalty to and interest in the culture, history and traditions of their state. Nowhere is this interest more thoroughly justified than in the amazing volume of literature poured out in the last eighty years by Indiana authors.

This publication, "Indiana Writers," by Professor Richard Cordell of the Purdue English Department, is a brief history of the literature of our state. Citizens who were brought up on Eggleston, McCutcheon, Ade, and Tarkington will be pleased to be reminded again of their favorites. Those not so familiar with the glamorous roster of native writers will, it is hoped, be interestingly informed; and all may discover new areas for critical discussion.

The dual purpose of this bulletin is, in fact, to inform and to provoke discussion. "Provoke" is an apt word: the author has cheerfully presented opinions which he knows very well are at certain points contrary to opinions commonly held. He is not, for example, a whole-hearted admirer of Lloyd Douglas, nor a lover of the exaggeratedly romantic literature which once flowed so easily from the pens of some Indiana

*Prepared cooperatively by Home Economics Extension, the English Department and the Department of Agricultural Information*

authors. But the reader may rest assured that behind the occasionally barbed criticism—as well as the qualified bursts of approval—lies a genuine love of literature.

Though he would not expect anyone to swallow his opinions whole, Professor Cordell does have a certain right to express them. He is a member of the family and a long-time student of Indiana literature. Born in Bloomington, Indiana, he attended Indiana University, did graduate work in London, England, and after discharge from the army in 1919, came to Purdue, where he taught until 1964. He is emeritus George Ade professor of English. For many years, he has interested himself in Indiana authors, having written at least one article (and many book reviews) on the subject for *The Saturday Review of Literature*. Incidentally, he is also the author of the biography of Somerset Maugham, whose very good friend he is. The Indiana Book Award for biography went to Professor Cordell in 1962, and he is the editor of various drama and fiction collections.

As a sort of footnote to this bulletin, it ought to be said that Indiana is still turning out authors at a fearful rate. Once a year, at a luncheon given for Indiana authors, Indiana University bestows awards upon five chosen writers. In 1956, although only five got the prizes, fifty were nominated as possible recipients. According to Professor Cordell, who attended, several famous literary people showed up or were represented: Kenneth P. Williams (author of *Lincoln Finds a General*); Will Hays, Jr.; Jessamyn West (represented by a relative), whose Indiana-based stories are well-known.

This publication is aimed primarily at the women's groups of the state. The adult reader eventually seeks, not mere escape or superficial "moralizing," but a genuine morality, based on ethics, sound psychology, truthfulness. When the critic thus sharpens the edge of his sword, disagreements follow. But these are healthy and usually lead to more accurate judgments.

This publication is a cooperative venture among Home Economics Extension, the English Department and the Department of Agricultural Information. If it fills a need, there may be others. If you would like more, let us know.

*Charles H. Green,  
Editor for the English Department*

Charles H. Green, who wrote this Preface for the 1956 publication, is now in the English Department of Arlington State College, Arlington, Texas.

# Indiana Writers

by Richard A. Cordell

THERE HAVE been numerous explanations of the extraordinary literary activity in Indiana from 1870 to 1950, but none are entirely satisfying. For this brief survey it is sufficient merely to point out that our state was nationally famous as a vigorous literary center for eighty years; and as we pass into the last third of the twentieth century, of the making of many books by Hoosiers there is still no end—and some are very good books indeed.

John Moriarty, Director of Purdue Libraries, in a thorough statistical study of American best sellers between 1900 and 1950, has uncovered some astonishing facts: that three or four times as many popular books came out of Indiana as from any of her four bordering states; that more best sellers were written by Hoosiers than by writers of any other state, even New York.

## Early Literary Stir

Even before Indiana became a state in 1816, there had been considerable literary activity in the southern section,

partly because of encouragement afforded by Cincinnati periodicals. A number of colleges were founded before 1816, and Indiana University, the oldest state university west of the Alleghenies, was founded in 1820. (Incidentally it is interesting to note that the pioneer boys who attended I. U. studied only two subjects the first year the university was in session: Latin and Greek. Higher mathematics was added the second year. Our early state leaders evidently thrived on this intellectual fare.)

The locating of a great publishing house in Indiana, the Bobbs-Merrill Company, undoubtedly had a healthful effect on the literary climate of the state. In recent years the enterprising Indiana University Press, under the imaginative direction of Bernard Perry, has become one of the most distinguished university presses in the nation; its list of publications include many notable books by European and American writers. Beginning in a modest way, "Purdue Studies" in only a few years has published interesting critical and biographical works by Purdue staff members. In 1961 James Lamar Wiegand announced that he operated the last private press in Indiana, The Indiana Kid Private Press in Napanee.

Moreover the writing of books has "paid" in our state; many writers such as Eggleston, Riley, Gene Stratton



Porter, Meredith Nicholson, and Lloyd Douglas prospered mightily in their profession, and their success helped create an atmosphere of friendship toward, and pride in, writers in general.

It is well to mention, too, that Indiana has been a literate community from the start, and that the equating of "Hoosier" with "ignorant" and "backwoods" is unjustified. For example, the percentage of literacy in Indiana in 1900 was exactly the same as in Massachusetts, which was then considered our most civilized state. For whatever reasons, between 1816 and 1916 more than 900 Indiana authors produced 8,000 books, exclusive of textbooks, collected sermons, and technical works. All together, before 1914, 15,000 Hoosier books were published and were copyrighted in Washington.



### **Who Is An Indiana Writer?**

A question arises at the beginning: just who is an Indiana writer? Is it anyone who was born here but who lived elsewhere? Is it a writer who has immigrated to Indiana? Can we include those who were born elsewhere, lived here for a period, and then moved on? Or must we apply the term rigorously to native Hoosiers who have remained in the state?

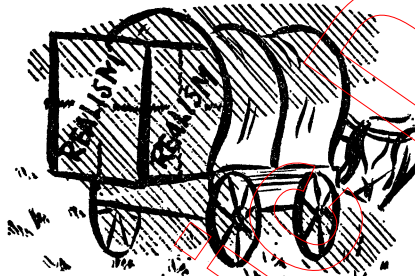
In the first group are literally hundreds, among them George Jean Nathan, A. B. Guthrie, Bernard Sobel, Claude Bowers, Elmer Davis, David Graham Phillips, William Vaughn Moody, John Hay, Theodore Dreiser, Karl Vonnegut, and Rex Stout. In the second group, which is much smaller, are William E. Wilson, Sam Yellen, Bertita Harding, Herbert J. Muller, John D. Barnhart, various members of the Owen family of New Harmony. Among those in the third group, those who were born outside the state and lived here only a few years, are Ring Lardner, Edwin Way Teale, Ambrose Bierce, Abraham Lincoln, David Starr Jordan, and George Washington Cable—none of whom we could accurately claim as Indiana writers. In the last group are such indubitable Hoosiers as James Whitcomb Riley, George Ade, Meredith Nicholson, Edward Eggleston, Lew Wallace, Charles Major, Maurice Thompson, Gene Stratton Porter, and Booth Tarkington. Actually in a country where there is a great and restless moving about, such fussy classifications are unimportant.

Until the mid-1950's most of the widely read Indiana books were novels. Naturally critics and reviewers have found them to vary greatly in excellence, declaring some of them to be of distinction, but some of very little or no merit whatever. Among critics there is general agreement (outside Indiana) that Theodore Dreiser, born in Terre Haute, is the state's greatest literary figure; in fact, many literary historians regard him as the greatest American novelist in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Because of his uncompromising naturalism and philo-



sophical pessimism he has not been highly esteemed in his home state, where romanticism, optimism, and wishful thinking were long preferred to realism. Nevertheless, *Jennie Gerhardt*, *Sister Carrie*, and *An American Tragedy* are three of the great novels of the first twenty-five years of our century, and worthy of the attention of serious readers.

Next in critical favor, although he is less highly regarded than formerly, is Booth Tarkington (he had his freshman English at Purdue), whose *Penrod* and *Seventeen* do not amuse a new generation as much as they did an older one, but whose *Alice Adams* and *The Magnificent Ambersons* with their authentic Hoosier settings are among our literary treasures.



### **Eggleston—Pioneer of Realism**

Older novelists of some merit who received less critical acclaim but who achieved a wide popularity are Edward Eggleston, David Graham Phillips, Meredith Nicholson, Lew Wallace, Maurice Thompson, and Charles Major. The most important historically is Eggleston, whose *Hoosier Schoolmaster* in 1871 was a pioneer attempt at realism in American fiction. In spite of its Dickensian extravagance it presents a

picture of southern Indiana in the early nineteenth century with some elements of truth in it. Phillips' *Susan Lennox*, *Her Rise and Fall* was an early sociological novel of some significance. Meredith Nicholson is hardly read now, though fifty years ago *The House of a Thousand Candles* was a best seller. Nicholson's collections of essays, such as *Old Familiar Faces*, are still charming and readable.

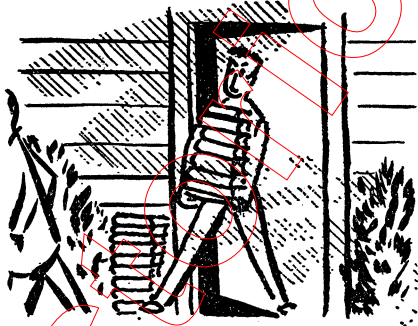
The best of Lew Wallace is not in his novels of far-off places and times such as *Ben Hur*, but in his *Autobiography*; for like most of us Wallace wrote best about things he actually knew most about. His was a rich and colorful life—in Montgomery County, as a general in the Civil War, as a member of the court which tried the Lincoln conspirators, as Governor of New Mexico Territory, as ambassador to Turkey. Wallace was by no means a bad writer, and his *Autobiography* provides a valuable picture of nineteenth century America.

Maurice Thompson, soldier, engineer, poet, lawyer, is best known for his *Alice of Old Vincennes*. (Vincennes' high school basketball team is called The Alices.) Charles Major's *When Knighthood Was in Flower* revived a vogue for historical fiction of a flamboyant sort, but his romances would interest few mature readers today. Stephen Crane branded them "Chambermaids' literature." In fact one British critic declared snobbishly that every household servant in England read *Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall*.

Hoosier novelists who have received no kind word from reputable critics are among the most widely read:

the books of Gene Stratton Porter, Margaret Weymouth Jackson, George Barr McCutcheon, and Lloyd Douglas have sold by the millions, but in the opinion of these severe critics they have little merit. Such a writer as Lloyd Douglas, for example, could concoct a first-rate story (the plot of *The Robe* is certainly ingenious), but the immature style and frequent moralizing do not appeal to most adult readers.

Recent novelists of more than passing interest include William E. Wilson, Jessamyn West, Ross Lockridge, Jr., Harvey Wheeler, Kurt Vonnegut, A. B. Guthrie (this Bedford-born novelist's *The Way West* was the critics' choice for 1949), Joseph A. Hayes of Indianapolis, whose exciting thriller *The Desperate Hours* the author himself dramatized (the stage version became one of the half dozen most successful plays of the 1954-1955 season), and Marguerite Young. In fact the enthusiastic reception of *The Way West* and *Raintree County* gave pause nearly



twenty years ago to those who spoke of Indiana literature only in the past tense. For a period of a few weeks the best selling book of non-fiction and the best selling novel in the United States

were written by two near neighbors in Bloomington, Alfred Kinsey and Ross Lockridge, Jr.

### **Historians, Biographers, Poets**

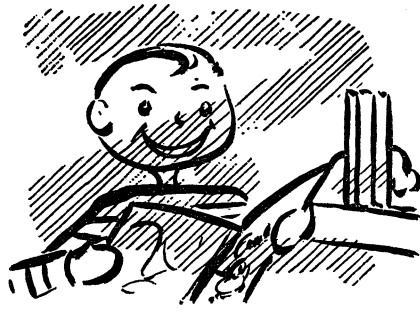
In history and biography Indiana has more than contributed its share. The biographies and histories of John Clark Ridpath, an eminent university professor and administrator for twenty years following the Civil War, were once to be found in nearly every locality in the nation, largely as a result of skilful salesmanship in the day of the aggressive "book agent." John Hay of Salem—novelist, poet, essayist, diplomat, statesman—collaborated with Nickolai to write one of the most valuable biographies of Lincoln. Hay was a private secretary to, and confidant of, the President and lived in the White House.

Senator Albert J. Beveridge wrote distinguished biographies of John Marshall and Abraham Lincoln. John W. Dulles, grandfather of John Foster Dulles, was the author of several books on American diplomacy. Charles and Mary Beard wrote brilliantly on American civilization and politics, but their studies were too "controversial" to win approval from the timid and ultra-conservative. Logan Esary's various books on Indiana history became something more than textbooks, as did Claude Bowers' penetrating studies of Jefferson and Hamilton.

Generally regarded as the best American historical work in 1949 was Kenneth Williams' *Lincoln Finds a General*, and the following year *The Old Northwest*, by R. C. Buley, won a Pulitzer prize. It is another Indiana resident, Herbert J.



Muller, historian and critic, who has provided in *The Uses of the Past* the most lucid and intelligent answer to Arnold Toynbee's facile charting of the dynamics and demise of civilizations. Other non-fiction authors of note are



James Randall, George Mayer, Holman Hamilton, and a leading authority on Dr. Samuel Johnson, James C. Clifford.

Among the hundreds of Indiana poets the first to come to mind is, of course, James Whitcomb Riley, "the people's laureate." Riley's very limitations as a poet probably enhanced his popularity—his sentimentalism, his shameless use of bathos, his idealization of farm life (Riley was a town or city dweller all his life), the almost complete absence of serious thought. His famous Hoosier dialect is often merely a careful reporting of bad grammar and uncouth pronunciations rather than a true representation of dialect such as we find in the poetry of Robert Burns. But Riley at his best, as in "When the Frost is on the Punkin'," "Little Orfant Annie," and "The Old Swimmin' Hole," succeeds in arousing an agreeably melancholy nostalgia rarely achieved by the verse of any other poet.

Joaquin Miller, "the poet of the Sierras," who was born near Liberty,

Indiana, was the most absurdly overpraised poet of his day, and is now unread. John Hay's *Pike County Ballads* are still delightful. "Paddle Your Own Canoe" by Sarah Bolton has not been quite forgotten. The unintentionally funny poems of James B. Elmore, Bard of Alamo, are little short of priceless, especially "The Monon Wreck" with the unforgettable agonized line "Saw oh saw my leg away!"

Perhaps the best American poet in the early years of the century was William Vaughn Moody, born in Spencer; he brought to his verse scholarship, thought, poetic skill, and a sensitive social conscience. Theodore Dreiser's brother Paul, who changed the spelling of the family name to "Dresser," was the author of such maudlin songs as "The Blue and the Gray," "The Pardon That Came too Late," "Just Tell Them That You Saw Me," etc. The best known Hoosier-born versifier in recent years was Cole Porter, whose clever lyrics are probably just as good as those of W. S. Gilbert of Gilbert and Sullivan fame. Mention should be made of Samuel Yellen, whose verse appears in the *New Yorker* and other periodicals, Barriss Mills, Ruth Stone, Felix Stefanile, and Lionel Wiggam.

### Children's Books

Among the Hoosier-born writers of children's books several have achieved national fame. An entire generation of American girls (any many surreptitious readers among the boys) read the whole series of Little Colonel books, by Annie Fellowes Bacon. Martha Finley, creator of the namby-pamby Elsie Dinsmore, was born in Indiana. For



years few American girls and boys who were at all literate failed to read and reread Tarkington's stories of adolescents. Certainly Mrs. Porter's *Freckles*, *Laddie*, *The Harvester*, and *A Girl of the Limberlost* are books for readers in their early teens. Among leading American writers for children today is Jeannette Nolan of Indianapolis. Other authors in this group are Alan Honour, Augusta Stevenson, Clara Judson, and Elizabeth Frierhood.

#### Hoosier Playwrights

A few Hoosiers have written successfully for the theatre, but not many. George Ade was a very popular playwright in the first decade of the century, once having four plays running concurrently on Broadway. Although audiences could not enjoy his crude comedies now, echoes of his famous



*The College Widow* can still be heard in an occasional Hollywood or television production dealing fancifully with college life. Moody's plays belong to the poetry shelf, except *The Great Divide*, an early modern play with an "idea." Booth Tarkington tried in vain time after time to write a successful play, although other writers adapted successfully some of his stories for stage and screen. The most notable Indiana playwright in recent years is Paul Osborn, author of *On Borrowed Time*, *Morning's at Seven*, *A Bell for Adano*, and *Point of No Return*.

#### Ade and Hubbard

Two Indiana humorists have achieved international fame, George Ade and Kin Hubbard.

George Ade created a new literary genre, the modern fable, amusing, satirical, skeptical of moral pretensions, and devastating in its pillory of the insincere, the four-flusher, the stupid, the hypocrite. Ade even experimented with words and language, using some slang boldly and effectively, and capitalizing words for humorous effect. The Fables are delightful, especially those written about 1900. He was a forerunner of H. L. Mencken, Sinclair Lewis, E. B. White, and other humorists and satirists who in the reaction against Victorianism let a lot of fresh air into places where it was badly needed.

An equally expert humorist was Kin Hubbard, whose Abe Martin was for twenty years the best known Hoosier nationally. In every issue of the Indianapolis *News* was a scratchy drawing and under it two brief sentences of penetrating wit. These are not mere

gags such as radio and television comedians memorize and recite, but sharp, witty observations on American life, politics, social customs, current fads, fashions, etc. One forgets how keen and shrewd and hilarious Kin Hubbard is until he picks up a collection of his epigrams and brief, humorous essays and starts reading. No other American humorist has ever been so consistently amusing—and wise.

The Abe Martin feature was syndicated and appeared in hundreds of American newspapers; twenty-five years after Hubbard's death Abe Martin was still to be found in many daily papers. He survived transatlantic passage, too, and his collected sayings sold widely in England. The august London *Times* declared unequivocally that this Indianapolis newspaper wit was the greatest American humorist.

In speaking of humorists we must again mention Booth Tarkington, espe-



cially his stories of boyhood and adolescence. Although most critics find these studies incomplete and prudish, they are often amusing and have a measure of surface truth. Howard Brubaker's column "Of All Things" was for years the wittiest corner of *The New Yorker*, in its early days when it was more

amusing and scintillating than it is now. Emily Kimbrough of Muncie has contributed to *The New Yorker* and other periodicals diverting autobiographical sketches.

### **Elmer Davis, Typical Hoosier**

Special mention should be made here of Elmer Davis, whose quiet, unforced humor encouraged Americans to remain sane and unruffled amid the hysteria and theatrics of many other news "analysts" in print and on the air, and of loud-mouthed politicians. What a rare compliment is paid to Indiana when "foreigners" consider Elmer Davis the typical Hoosier! Perhaps the typical Hoosier is a would-be writer at heart. George Ade told the story of an Eastern author who spoke before an Indiana lyceum audience and who began his talk with a flattering remark about the vast amount of writing done in the state. When he politely invited all the writers present to come take seats on the platform, the entire audience stood up and moved forward. One has the feeling that such a yarn a generation or two ago was less implausible in Indiana than in most states.

Of the many other Indiana writers only a few can be mentioned in this brief bulletin. George Cary Eggleston, brother of Edward, wrote numerous novels between 1870 and 1900 with southern Indiana as the setting. Baynard Rush Hall, first principal of the state seminary (later Indiana University) was an early pioneer satirist. One of his books, *The New Purchase*, is a spirited, humorous, irreverent account of the academic community—from the beginning there was salt as well as sugar in our books. All the members

of the talented Owen family were busy with the pen, as were the Mortons, Merrills, Fletchers, and various Wallaces and Wilstachs.

Ernie Pyle was the most beloved and widely read war correspondent in



World War II. Janet Flanner ("Gent") of Indianapolis writes the brilliant Paris letters for *The New Yorker*. Heath Bowman and William Wilson are two of a large number who have written books about their native state. Robert and Helen Lynd in *Middletown* made a study of a typical urban community that rises above mere statistical sociology. Walter Havighurst in *The Heartland* makes a shrewd observation concerning this sensational best seller in 1929. Pointing out that the Lynds in seeking a representative American community had to reject New England, Southern, and Far Western towns, Havighurst notes that they had to choose one from "that common denominator of America, the Middle West, near the center of population, then in Indiana." He concludes that the finding of a representative Middletown (Muncie) in Indiana marked the end of an era: "When Indiana ceased to be unique and became typical, the Hoosier tradition was past."

Albert E. Wiggam wrote many widely read books on anthropology and psychology for the layman. Donald and Eleanor Laird of Lafayette are a pair of the nation's most prolific and best known writers on industrial psychology. Nor must one forget Wendell Willkie's *One World*.

### Suggestions for Reading

The final section of this publication is devoted to a reading list which organizations might find rewarding for group discussions. These are not at all the ten best Hoosier books or the ten most popular, but they provide a variety of subject matter and illustrate the wide range of Indiana writing. Represented in the list are autobiography, satirical fables, fiction, poetry, history, and crisp modern essays of a patriotic and provocative nature. The most notable omission is the highly romantic fiction, an area in which Indiana writers have distinguished themselves in quantity rather than quality.

1. The first suggestion is *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*, by Edward Eggleston, a clergyman who said that he wanted to do for Indiana life and people what the impersonal Dutch painters of the Seventeenth Century had done for Holland. *The Hoosier Schoolmaster* (1871) is a minor classic of American literature, and although the influence of Dickens is sometimes stronger than that of the Dutch realists, the novel gives a reasonably faithful picture of pioneer days in southern Indiana. Two other novels by Eggleston are well worth reading: *The Circuit Rider* and *The Graysons*.

2. Certainly some Riley should be read. Any one volume or the Collected

Poems would do. It might prove interesting to evaluate his picture of rural life, examine his dialect, separate the banalities from the shrewd observations, look for evidence of Riley the platform entertainer, read his little known but meritorious non-dialect poems, account for his enormous popularity. Why, though, does he fail to achieve the wider popularity of Robert Burns? School children all over the English speaking world read Burns, with glossary of Scottish words and phrases but Riley does not lend himself to export. Why?

3. A volume of George Ade's Fables must be one of the ten: *Fables in Slang*, *More Fables*, or *Forty Modern Fables*—they are equally good and were all written about 1900. It is quite possible that Ade has been underestimated as a debunker and a shrewd satirist of much that is ludicrous in American life. The vigor and freshness have not faded from these fables in half a century, though much that was topical in 1899 is only pleasantly quaint today. But much of the satire has lost none of its sting, for we still have hypocrisy, fashionable preachers, money grubbers, priggishness, snobbery, political chicanery, social climbing, etc. Readers should note the use of capital letters, the fun in the "morals," the cynicism, the ridiculing of fads, the humorous use of both exaggeration and understatement.

4. Theodore Dreiser's first novel, *Sister Carrie* (1900), is one of his best. It is a typical piece of naturalistic fiction—realistic, impersonally narrated, the "heroine" moved by forces not of her choosing (the naturalist rejects the notion of free will); there is implied a

philosophy of pessimism—that is, a denial of any evidence that the world is controlled by an intelligent or kind force.

The story of *Sister Carrie* is simply told (and Carrie is a simple person!); even if one's taste is more inclined toward the rose-colored view of life in fiction, he finds himself following Carrie's adventures with enormous interest, and the final scene in the New York hotel is unforgettable. . . . In addition to fiction, Dreiser wrote several personal books, one of which, *Dawn*, is among the best American autobiographies.

5. Probably the best book of Booth Tarkington for adult readers is *Alice Adams*, for in this novel his realism is not unduly weakened by what has been called his ostrich-like sentimentalism. Tarkington viewed with distaste the frank realism of Dreiser, Anderson, and Lewis; and although his books are superficially true to life, his flattering picture of middle class people and their morality, his faith in the "happy ending" and the inevitable triumph of integrity have annoyed critics and many intelligent readers.

*Alice Adams* (1921), however, is an honest book, written with the author's technical facility and graceful style, and full of good scenes and portraiture. Who can ever forget Alice's dinner party on the tropically hot evening, or the genuinely poignant scene that brings the novel to an end? For once Tarkington seemed to forget his adoring public and carry a story through boldly to its honest conclusion. Also worth reading are *The Turmoil*, *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *The Midlander*.



6. It makes no difference which collection of *Abe Martin* is read: the reader is sure to be entertained and enlightened. Although many of his aphorisms and much of his cracker-barrel philosophy have sharp stings, there is never any hint of self-superiority and never a sneer. Hubbard liked people, and one has the feeling that when he is laughing at the human race, he is aware that Hubbard is a member.

Readers feel a glow of recognition when they read Hubbard's quips. It is hard to refute "When a feller says it hain't the money but the principle of the thing, it's the money," or "When a woman says, 'I don't wish to mention any names'—it ain't necessary," or "Classical music is the kind we keep hopin' will turn into a tune," or "A friend that ain't in need is a friend indeed." One should note the dates of his shrewd sayings—especially interesting are his comments on the 1920's. Hubbard was a bit of a seer, too—almost forty years ago he reported that some boy had quit high school because of poor parking facilities. No other American writer can so successfully evoke the strange shenanigans of American life in the 1920's and 1930's.

7. Elmer Davis of Aurora wrote novels in the 1920's, but in the radio and television era he wrote essays, comments on the world he lived in, wise and bold comments. He is an excellent writer: his prose is lucid, concise, and straightforward. He steps boldly over territory most writers tiptoe through, but his sentences never fail to have serenity and poise. His is the wide view and the long view; he knew international politics and he knew history, and he reported the passing scene with au-

thority, sometimes with a touch of wry humor, but never with hysteria, rarely with emotion of any kind. A realist with a clear vision, he nevertheless clings to the idealism of Thomas Jefferson. Elmer Davis was an American liberal in the best sense of that abused word, and naturally was viewed with distaste by extreme reactionaries—and still is.

The dry, almost scratchy voice of Davis was familiar to every radio listener over a period of years; and no other voice inspired so much confidence and had such a ring of common sense as this Hoosier's. An excellent book by Davis for group discussion bears the cheerful title *But We Were Born Free*. Here he deals bluntly with disturbing problems of the day—censorship, thought control, the alleged dangers of dissent, academic freedom, threats to education, restricting and coloring news, etc. There is an informative and provocative chapter on constitutional amendments, a delightful essay on old age, and a discussion of "Are We Worth Saving, and If So, Why?" The final sentence of the book is "This republic was not established by cowards, and cowards will not preserve it."

8. One of the best histories written by a Hoosier is the work of an eminent mathematician, Kenneth P. Williams of Bloomington. *Lincoln Finds a General* is a long book dealing primarily with only one of the many problems that harassed Lincoln in his desperate years in the White House, but it was his chief military problem: how to find the right general to lead the Northern armies to victory. Lincoln knew that some of the best American generals



were in the South, and that they with their cleverness and military skill were doing much to offset the North's superiority in resources.

*Lincoln Finds a General* is probably the best of all books about General Grant, the victim of scandalous rumors, exaggerations, and distortions. For all his faults there was a greatness in Grant, which glows in the pages of this book. How many Hoosiers know that early in the war Grant was visiting a classmate, Joseph Reynolds, who lived in Lafayette on Main Street near Sixth, when he received the telegram with news of his commission?

9. A work by an Indiana author which has gained year after year in critical respect and number of readers is *Uses of the Past*, by Herbert J. Muller. It is a book to own, read, mark up (it is available in an inexpensive paperback edition), and reread. It is unlikely that all members of a discussion group would agree completely with Dr. Muller's philosophy of history, his views of the Golden Age of Greece, Rome, and Old Russia, or with his interpretation of the impact on man and history of Judaism, Christianity, and Eastern philosophy. The author is a humanist, and some readers will equate humanism with anti-religion. Others will deplore his use of irony and the tragic view of history; but many will discover that underneath the unidealistic picture of the past lies hope for man if he will live intelligently and realize the uses of the past.

Six years after the publication of this significant work, Dr. Muller published *The Loom of History* in 1958,

an outgrowth of the earlier book. Written in the author's usual attractive, lucid style, this historical-philosophical-religious study of the contribution of Asia Minor to world civilization will delight the readers it was intended for: not specialists or professors of history and philosophy, but intelligent lay readers who wish to know more about the world they live in as well as its past.

10. The final book in this suggested list is completely unlike the erudite volumes by Dr. Muller. William E. Wilson in *On the Sunny Side of a One-Way Street* has no other aim than to please, even charm, his readers. He succeeds thoroughly in this delightful fragment of autobiography, keeping the narrative sunny without making it sentimental or sticky. Some solemn, earnest readers may dismiss it as unsubstantial, but it is neither frivolous nor shallow. Wilson succeeds in recording this remembrance of things past, and imparts to it a recognizable flavor of time and place. One need look no further than *On the Sunny Side of a One-Way Street* for proof of the assertion that a great pleasure in reading is recognition. Readers will especially enjoy his account of life in southwestern Indiana, the amusing but not tiresomely eccentric characters, the tribulations and contretemps of a healthy boy growing up in the usual discouraging circumstances: under the watchful eyes of well-intentioned but to him irrational adults. To be sure, this book is escape literature—Somerset Maugham says that all literature is escape literature—but there are plenty of things in our world to escape from for a few hours.

*Improved Library Facilities Now Possible  
for Rural Indiana through New Law*

THE authors of Indiana from the beginning flourished in an atmosphere of literacy, which is of course the only atmosphere in which authors can flourish. Indiana had its schools and even good colleges from the state's earliest days, but it also had public concern and interest, clearly evidenced by early state legislation, in the culture of adults who were not in schools.

A law of 1837 allowed the majority of resident householders and freeholders of any school district to tax themselves \$20.00 a year so that they might support "a library for the use of the children, teachers, parents, and guardians" of the districts. As a result of the new education laws of 1852, township libraries became mandatory. The township trustee was to establish one or more libraries where all families—even those who did not have children in school—were to be allowed access to books. And the statute required that "no sectarian work shall be admitted to such libraries."

It was amid such respect and desire for books among a predominantly rural people that our Indiana authors were reared and started on literary careers. By the 1900's economic, social and cultural changes had become such that the earlier provisions for books were not adequate. However, Indiana cities did set up good libraries for themselves. By 1920 a number of libraries designed to serve on a county-wide basis were successfully established. But as late as 1965 as many as 1,000,000 citizens out of a population of almost 5,000,000 had no libraries to serve them with books. This is 20 percent, or one person out of five.

On June 19, 1956, a new opportunity was opened to American citizens to read more and better books. On that date the Libraries Service Act was passed by Congress. This act takes into account that across the nation library service for rural people is generally as absent as it is in Indiana. Under terms of this new national law, \$7,500,000 has been allocated each year and increased amounts appear to be in prospect for the states on a matching basis, worked out to take into account the library needs and the size of rural population. Indiana is to have about \$1,350,000 each year. With the annual availability of some such sum, a duty devolves on every public-minded person in an area which is unserved or inadequately served. The citizens of such areas should go to the nearest library and take up their book and library services needs with the local librarian and the local library board. This board will be

responsible for exploring with the Indiana State Library what possible help for its present and potential library users can be devised.

Our State Library is the agency in Indiana for overseeing the use of Indiana's share of the Library Services Act funds but its policy is to help areas to help themselves in library development. The State Library will not take over the entire responsibility for a community or hand out a complete library. Rather it will supplement local arrangements by possibly (1) providing a bookmobile to reach widely scattered patrons; or (2) adding to the book collection of a very small library a number of fine new books on a wide variety of subjects to give patrons a chance to know the pleasure these can bring; or (3) helping with the salary to see what improvement of service can come from more hours of opening or from special services to children or schools. And there can be many other ways to help.

If Indiana and our nation are to have the well-informed citizenry needed for the demands of our time, it is certainly apparent that neither libraries alone nor any one agency in our society alone can do the whole job. It will take all the agencies we have, plus new ones still to be formed, to achieve the cultural goals we seek. But it should also be clear that weakness in any such area as our rural library service is a danger to us all as well as a sad personal loss to the rural citizens involved.

As this publication tells, Indiana authors have appealed widely to Hoosier readers. Now, with the help of this new law, a better library service is possible. Hopefully more people, especially in rural Indiana, will come to enjoy the literature of their native state.

*John H. Moriarty,*  
*Director of University Libraries*

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